

**Testimony in Support H.B. 6550 An Act Concerning the Office Health  
Strategy's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions to Community  
Benefits Programs Administred by Hospitals**

Public Health Committee  
Cheryl Kapelner-Champ  
March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Dear Senator Mary Dougherty Abrams, Representative Jonathan Steinberg,  
and esteemed members of the Public Health Committee,**

My name is Cheryl Kapelner-Champ I live in Windham County, in the Town of Pomfret. I stand in support of HB 6550 An Act Concerning the Office of Health Strategy's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions to Community Benefits Programs Administered by Hospitals.

I serve as a member of the HEALTH COMMITTEE of the NAACP WINDHAM-WINDHAM WILLIMANTIC BRANCH.

My opinion in this statement are from my professional work experience, as a retired nurse. Due to over fifty years in the healthcare profession, I have personally taken care of numerous people, of all ages, with various medical needs from- Surgical, Emergency, Maternal and Childcare, School Nurse, and Psych, just to name a few.

In our training we are taught this essential early on-

**If one were to error, it needs be on the side of safety.**

I have serious concerns for the families who depend on the services at **Windham Memorial Community Hospital, known as Windham Hospital**. I worked at **Windham Hospital** back in the 1970's, our standard of care was well received by the community, we gave our all.

The elimination of Labor and Delivery, and Newborn Services is presently a serious situation for maternity patients, and their babies in Willimantic, CT, where **Windham Hospital** is located. In natural situations babies are born on their own schedules. Some come fast, others take more time, some are medically scheduled in advance for the health of the mother and baby, and some come at times that are unexpected when both mother and baby are thrown into life or impending death situations.

**How can the State of Connecticut** say in this situation regarding childbirth that they are erring on the side of safety due to the fact services have been presently eliminated at **Windham Hospital**? If in a flash moment a woman in labor is rushed on an ambulance and her baby is born on the side of the road which definitely puts the mother and child at risk for lifetime medical problems that couldn't be adequately taken care of because the mother and child were denied access to a hospital that prior to this was located in their own community? What makes this an acceptable way for Connecticut, one of the wealthiest states in the country to be able to say, **Our error was on the side of safety... ?**

Windham-Willimantic Connecticut is located slightly northeast on the map. When one studies the routes available to get to fully equipped Medical Centers it's obvious that all travels are on secondary roads such as Route 32, and Route 6. Route 6 is renowned as one of the most dangerous routes in Connecticut. If an accident were to occur on one of these routes, and traffic was slowed down during a mother's time in labor, and the outcome is less than good. **How could this be considered an error made on the side of safety.. ?**

It is necessary to add to the facts that will be considered regarding the future of Maternal and Infant Services at **Windham Hospital-**

Hartford Healthcare, and the State of Connecticut, have many brilliant minds working on solving this serious situation-

Back when I was a young ideal nursing student we trained in a profession we were proud to become part of. We never would have guessed that healthcare would be turned into an industry created from a business model of cost cutting, with dollars being more important than the wellbeing of the patients, hospitals were created to serve.

Last but not least- It is tragic, and urgently important to point out that the elimination of standard Labor and Delivery Care at **Windham Hospital** if not reinstated is an act of Racism. Racism's the proper word for this ongoing situation because a large percentage of women who live in the Windham-Willimantic area are people of color. Many are unable to travel into the assigned medical centers that Hartford Healthcare has designated, due to various reasons. It has been realized and accepted with states, and multiple cities throughout the United States, joining into finally declare in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century that,

"Racism Is A Public Health Crisis"

In order to be part of the solution it is necessary that the Maternity Services be reinstated as per the reasons shared in this letter of concern. Connecticut was one of the 13 Original Colonies, we are capable in leading in this way too.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Kapelner-Champ

Mother of three, two grandchildren, with one addition expected soon.